

"Scotchtown"  
Ashland Vicinity BEAVER DAM  
Hanover County  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-117

HABS  
VA  
43-BEVDAM  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
Virginia District

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office

SCOTCHTOWN  
Hanover County, Virginia

Owner: Miss Sally Taylor, Beaverdam, Virginia

Date of Erection: In 1698, as given by Elizabeth Lippincott  
Dean in Dolly Madison, the Nation's Hostess.

Architect:

Builder: Charles Chiswell (according to family tradition as given by Mrs. Thomas Atkinson Pollard, who married a direct descendant of Charles Chiswell, and who has in her possession a Bible of John Chiswell, who is the son of Charles Chiswell.)

Present Condition: The house is in a very poor state of preservation, the exterior especially. The brick basement walls where not removed are fairly sound. Some of what might have been the original beaded weather-boarding remains but a great deal has been replaced by plain weather-board. All badly in need of paint. The lean-to addition at the end of the house is in very poor condition and partly lined with panelling evidently removed from some part of the house. The great black marble mantel-pieces supported by white figures which Mrs. Madison referred to were removed at some time and replaced by wooden mantels. Two fragments of marble in the attic, insufficient to form a conception of what these mantels might have been, are all that remains. The large attic over the entire structure is unfinished with a rough board floor. The roof timbers are sound with all connections pinned together with wooden pins. The original roof has been replaced with tin.

Number of Stories: The structure has a basement throughout, with one main or first story above and a large unfinished attic over. A small lean-to addition on the east end has a basement and one story.

Materials of Construction: The exterior and interior walls of basement are brick; the first and only story above this, and the large attic over are frame construction. The roof is covered with tin. There are four large interior chimneys of brick extending high above the roof. The tops of two of them having evidently been lowered by the elements or otherwise. One room in the northeast corner of basement is floored with stone, the rest of the basement having dirt floor.

VA  
43-6540

The flooring in the first floor is of pine board, random width, resting on hewed joists, 4" x 10". There are two hewed oak girders, 9" x 11", extending across the house from front to rear which, it is assumed, formed the framing for the corner fireplace which Dolly Madison remembered. The walls and ceiling throughout the first story of the main structure are plastered with exception of the wainscoting in the main hall and small hall in east end which is of pine. The interior doors, most of them original, are in good condition; those in the hall and a few others including the cupboard door being of walnut, the others painted. The paneled wainscot in the hall is of pine, in good condition, painted. The basement walls of addition, and foundation walls of three entrance porches are of rubble stone work. The steps and floors of these three porches are dressed stone.

Historical Data: From Dolly Madison, the Nation's Hostess, by Elizabeth Lippincott Dean, the following abstract is taken:

"Many of the girlhood days of this first little daughter of John Payne were spent at Scotchtown, that old plantation home set on a flat-topped hill in a remote section of Hanover County, Virginia. This picturesque old house, built by a Scotchman as long ago as 1698, is a large, curious-looking old dwelling, a hundred feet long and half as wide, with its first story of brick and its main structure of wood. (Note 1: Scotchtown, which is still standing, is located a few miles from Ashland, Virginia. Its present owner, Miss Sallie Taylor of Beaverdam, has furnished many of the historic facts concerning it.) Scotchtown had already become historic before Dolly Payne lived there; for, in 1771, Patrick Henry bought it, hoping that the high ground would be a healthful place for his sick wife. The Henrys lived there until 1777, but the fresh air and wooded hills did not cure poor Mrs. Henry, who died soon after her arrival. It then became the home of Wileon Miles Cary, whose wife gave her jewels to help her country's cause at the time of the Revolution. Then John Payne bought it in order that he might have ample room for his increasing family. With the many large and spacious rooms on its lower floors, and the great room no less than a hundred feet long on the third floor, the Paynes not only found space for themselves but also for their many friends and guests.

"Many of the rooms of this great house were paneled or wainscoted with solid mahogany or walnut, with the principal ones decorated in selected colors. Patrick Henry spent much of his time in the green room, while it is said to have been in the blue room, the family room, that young Dolly sat beside her beautiful mother, Mary Coles Payne, and learned to sew. The black marble mantels over the corner fireplaces, which Dolly remembered so well in later years, had been brought from Scotland along with other material for the house. No less important than the individual rooms was the broad hall that passed across the main floor;

for in this hall, just at the left of the main doorway, is a trap-door which leads directly into a deep and mysterious dungeon about which there are many curious tales. It is reported, too, that the British troops rode up the front stone steps, through the wide hall, and out the opposite doorway of the handsome old place in order to disgrace Mr. Henry, then the owner.

"Extensive lawns and gardens of perennial flowers bordered by boxwood and shrubs surrounded Dolly Payns's house, with great numbers of locust and oak-trees planted in long rows. The curious, old boxwood in front, so grown as to form a perfect armchair, served often, it is said, as a resting place for Patrick Henry. Surrounding the house were enough little cabins to house thirty slaves. These slaves were engaged in various types of work in the fields and in the great house, for the plantation itself was self-supporting and supplied the family needs.

"From those handsome, broad stone steps at the north entrance, extensive forests and green fields could be seen with the South Anna and North Anna Rivers not a great distance away; and through the Paynes' plantation flowed the well-known New-Found River, on whose banks many historic homes have been built. Then to the south, almost as far as the eye could see, tree-bordered green fields abounded. The red road which skirted the plantation, and wound over hills and down little valleys was often almost impassable after the drenching rains of the fall and spring. With the forests and streams and green fields, with the flower gardens and grassy lawns, and with the many rooms in which to wander about in the old Scotchtown house, Dolly Payne must have found many diversions and plenty of space in which to amuse herself on the big plantation. The beauty of these Virginia hills and woodlands must have left with her also a lasting impression.

"The home in which Dolly Payne grew up may be regarded as quite similar to other southern plantation homes of well-to-do families of that time."

William Byrd, in his manuscript, A Progress to the Mines, speaks of visiting Chiswell in the year of 1732, remarking that he found everything "very clean, and very good."

The following is taken from Memoire and Letters of Dolly Madison:

"Towards the close of her life, Mrs. Madison frequently recalled the home of her childhood, dwelling upon the great black marble mantelpiece, supported by white figures. The house was called Scotchtown because of the emigrants, and was surrounded by a number of small brick houses, attached to the main building, which was very large, having as many as twenty rooms on a floor."

"The little country school to which Dolly Payne wended her way for the first twelve years was of the simplest description. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were all that was considered necessary, and though her educational advantages were greater after their removal to Philadelphia, her life until she married was rigidly simple and quiet, giving no scope for that intuitive tact and knowledge of character which was so conspicuous in after years.

"Equiped with a white linen mask to keep every ray of sunshine from the complexion, a sun-bonnet sewed on her head every morning by her careful mother, and long gloves covering the hands and arms, one can see the prim little figure starting off for school, with books under her arm, and the dear but wicked bauble safely hidden beneath the severely plain Quaker dress."

Lancaster describes Scotchtown as:

"The huge and interesting old house with the curious name Scotchtown was for a time the home of Patrick Henry who bought it in 1771 and was living in it when he was first elected Governor of Virginia. He sold it six or seven years later to Wilson Miles Cary. Afterwards Scotchtown passed to the possession of John Payne, and was the girlhood home of Dolly Payne, who became the wife of President James Madison. It is said that during the Revolution, Tarleton and his raiders rode their horses up the stone steps of Scotchtown and clattered through the wide hall."

Additional Data: Hanover Records burned in 1865 except two volumes 1733 to 1735, and 1787 to 1792.

#### Bibliography:

Memoirs and Letters of Dolly Madison, edited by her Grand-niece. Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Publishers. Copyright 1886.

Dolly Madison, the Nation's Hostess, by Elizabeth Lippincott Dean. Lathrop, Lee and Shepard Company, Publishers. Copyright 1928.

The Westover Manuscripts, containing The History of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina; A Journey to the Land of Eden, A. D. 1733; and A Progress to the Mines. Written from 1728 to 1736, and now first published by William Byrd, of Westover. Edmund and Julian C. Ruffin, Petersburg, Virginia, Printers. Copyright 1841.

VA  
43-REV-04

The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. Published quarterly by the Virginia Historical Society. Volume No. XXVIII, year ending December 31, 1925. Editor, William G. Stanard. Old Dominion Press, Printers, Richmond, Virginia.

Virginia Homes and Churches, by Robert A. Lancaster, Jr. J. B. Lippincott, publisher. Copyright 1915.

*Virginia Thompson*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervising Historian

Approved: June 24, 1936

*Eugene Bradbury*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
MAJOR EUGENE BRADBURY, A.I.A.  
District Officer

TW 6/14/37